

The Confessions of a German Deserter

Written by a Prussian Officer
Who Participated in the Ravaging and Pillaging of Belgium

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GERMAN SOLDIERS SLAY AND BURN UNDER ORDERS OF THEIR OFFICERS TO SHOW NO MERCY

Synopsis.—The author of these confessions, an officer in the pioneers' corps of the German army, a branch of the service corresponding to the engineers' corps of the United States army, is sent into Belgium with the first German forces invading that country. Ignorant of their destination or of the reasons for their actions, the German soldiers cross the border and attack the Belgian soldiers defending their frontier. Civilians—men, women and children—are driven from their burning homes as the Zeppelins and giant guns of the Germans raze the strongest fortifications.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

The same evening we were transported in automobiles and on the evening of August 20, 1914, we reached our detachment, which was about 35 miles from the Belgian city of Neuve Chateau. The regiment to which I belonged did not take part in any operations after the fall of Liege, but was transported to this part of Belgium. Now I learn for the first time how heavy was the loss in my company in the Liege fighting. We lost 187 men in dead and wounded.

This night we slept in an open field. At five o'clock the next morning we marched again until four o'clock in the afternoon, when we were given a rest.

It was about ten o'clock in the evening when we received orders to advance. We were all ready to proceed when another order came for us to remain at our bivouac overnight. During the night we heard thundering of cannon which became more violent. The battle of Neuve Chateau, which had continued from August 22 to August 24, 1914, had begun.

At four o'clock on the morning of August 22 we resumed our march. At Neuve Chateau the French army had encountered the Fourth German army. First there was, as always, minor outpost and patrol fighting. By and by larger masses of troops participated, and as we took our part in the battle on the evening of August 22, the fight had developed into one of the most sanguinary of the world war.

When we arrived the French occupied almost three-quarters of the town. The artillery had set the main part of Neuve Chateau on fire and only the beautiful residence section in the western part of the city escaped at that time. All night long the house-to-house fighting continued, but when at noon of August 23 the city was in German hands the enormous cost to the Germans could finally be determined.

Residences, cellars, streets and sidewalks were heaped with dead and wounded. The houses were in ruins—empty shells, in which hardly anything remained undamaged that was of any real value. Thousands became beggars in one terrible night. Women and children, soldiers and citizens were lying where the pitiless shells and bullets had hurled them from life into death's dark void. True impartiality reigned in the killing. There was a Belgian woman lying next to a Belgian baby which she had borne from house to street. Close by lay a man of uncertain years before an empty house. Both his legs were burned to the knees. His wife lay on his breast and sobbed so pitifully that her grief could not be endured. Most of the dead were entirely or partly burned. The cries of agony of the animals fighting incineration were mixed with the groans and sobbing of the wounded.

But no one had time to bother with them. The French were making another stand outside the city in an open field. As the enemy vacated the town the Germans made an error which cost them hundreds of lives. They had occupied the entire town so quickly that the German artillery which shelled a part of the city did not know of the change in the situation and threw shells into the ranks of the infantry. Finally our soldiers were compelled to give up some of their gains by the pressure of our own as well as the French fire, but regained this ground afterwards. Strangely enough, the residence section previously mentioned had not suffered seriously. All the houses flew the Red Cross and were used as temporary hospitals.

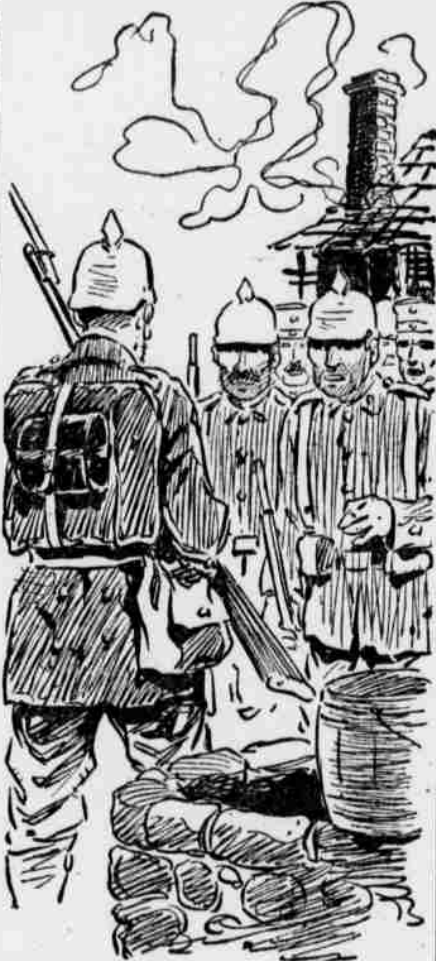
Here it was reported that Belgians mutilated German soldiers. Whether this were true, or only a rumor, similar

to others being constantly started by German soldiers, I cannot say, but I do know that on August 24, after the French had retired, it was made known through an army order that German soldiers had been murdered there, and that the German army could not leave the scene of these outrages without first avenging the victims.

It was ordered by the commander of the army to level the remainder of the city and to show no mercy. As we took a short rest from our pursuit of the enemy and looked backward clouds of smoke to the eastward showed that the order had been executed. A remaining battery of artillery had reduced the city to ashes.

The French had made a stand outside the city and resisted to the utmost, but they were outnumbered. It was simply impossible to resist the pressure of the German war machine. When the German columns, with fixed bayonets, attacked to the accompaniment of their blood-curdling yells which, like their steel, penetrated to the bone, they resembled in every respect American Indians going into action, flinging themselves with blood-curdling yells upon their enemies. After a three-hour fight many Frenchmen gave themselves up as prisoners. With uplifted hands they sought mercy.

At last, on the night of August 23 and 24, the enemy's ranks were thrown into confusion and they retired slowly.



Cursed and Gnashed Their Teeth.

I was in the first detachment which pursued them. To the right and left of the road, in the field and ditches, were dead and wounded.

The red pantaloons of the French showed brightly on the ground. The field gray of the Germans could hardly be discerned.

The distance between us and the retreating French became greater. Our soldiers became happier over the outcome of the battle and seemed to forget their past hardships. The corpses which filled the roads and ditches were forgotten amid the jokes and songs on every side. The men were already accustomed to the horrors of war to such an extent that they unconcernedly walked over the corpses, not even considering it necessary to make a slight detour.

At noon we halted and were served with dinner from the field kitchens. We were surely hungry enough and our canned soup was eaten with the utmost relish. Many soldiers set their dishes on the bodies of dead horses lying about and ate as gayly as if they were at home at their own tables. The few human corpses near our camp failed to disturb us. Only water was lacking, and after the dinner our thirst became very acute, even torturous.

We soon marched on, under a burning mid-day sun, the dust of the highway lying thick on our uniforms and skin. Now, no more cheerfulness was evident anywhere. Our thirst became more unbearable and we grew weaker from minute to minute. Many in our ranks fell, unable to go further. Nothing remained for our commander except to halt, as he did not wish to exhaust us all. As a result of this halt we were left considerably in the rear and lost our place among those pursuing the French.

About four o'clock we finally saw before us a village. In the certain expectation of getting water there we quickened our pace. Fugitives and empty munition columns passed us. Among them there was a farm wagon upon which were several civilian prisoners, apparently franc-tireurs. A Catholic priest was among them. He, like the others, had his hands tied behind him with a rope. To our curious questions as to what he had done, we were told that he had incited the farmers to poison the water in the village.

Soon we reached the village and at the first well at which we might have satisfied our thirst we found a sentinel posted. He drove us away with a warning that the water was poisoned.

Disappointed and terribly embittered, the soldiers cursed and gnashed their teeth. They hurried on to the next well, but everywhere sentinels forbade our taking refreshment.

In an open space in the center of the village was a big well from which there came water clear as crystal that emptied into a big trough. Five soldiers stood guard here to see that no one drank. I was just about to proceed with my comrades when a large part of my company threw themselves like men possessed onto the well. The guards were completely overcome and, greedy as animals, all the men drank. They quenched their thirst, but not one became ill. The priest, as we learned later, was punished because, the officers said, the water in every village had been poisoned, and we were told that only by a happy chance had the lives of our soldiers been spared. The God of the Germans had kept true guard, it appeared, but the God of the Belgians was not there to protect his.

In most of the places we passed we were warned not to use the water. This, of course, had the effect of making the soldiers hate the people from whom they could expect only death. In this way the vicious instincts of our men were aroused.

The water, of course, was nowhere poisoned. These lies were told to arouse hatred of the Belgians among our soldiers.

In the evening, at dusk, we reached a village east of the Bertrix. There we found poisoned water also. In the middle of the village we halted and I could see through a front window of a house before which I stood. In a miserable home of a laborer we saw a woman. She clung to her children as if afraid they would be torn away from her. Suddenly a stone as large as a fist was thrown through the window into the room and a little girl was wounded on the right hand.

In this village we were billeted in a barn. With some comrades, I went to the village to buy food. We obtained ham, bread and wine at a farmhouse, but the people refused any payment because they considered us guests. They only asked that we should not hurt them. We paid them nevertheless for everything, in German money. There, as everywhere else we went, we found the population in mortal terror of us. The people trembled whenever a German soldier entered their home.

CHAPTER III.

Four of us had formed a close friendship. We had promised to keep together and help one another in every danger. So we often visited the homes of citizens together and did our best to quiet the harassed people we met and talk them out of fear of our forces. Without exception we found these people friendly and quick to feel confidence in us when they learned that we really were their friends. If we wrote on their doors with chalk, "Here live good, honest people, please spare them," their gratitude knew no bounds. If so much bad blood existed and if so many things which led to the military execution of innumerable Belgians, it was because of the mistrust systematically nourished on the part of the German officers.

That night we marched on after being joined by a 21-centimeter mortar battery of the foot artillery regiment No. 9 recently arrived. Not only were we to act as an auxiliary for this battery, but we were also expected to help bring these immense cannon into action. These guns were in two sections,

each transported on a wagon pulled by six horses. These horses, the only ones used by foot artillery, are supposed to be the finest and most powerful in the German army.

Yet these animals were seldom up to expectations, so that it was a common thing to detail from 70 to 80 men to assist in transporting these mortars, and long, heavy ropes were carried for this purpose. This happened most frequently whenever the guns had to be taken off a highway and brought into a firing position.

Soon we arrived at the city of Bertrix. We found many houses at the right and left of us burning brightly. They had been set afire, we learned, because persons in them had fired on passing soldiers. In front of one of these houses was a half-burned man and woman with their fifteen or sixteen-year-old son. All were covered with straw. A little way farther on, three more civilians were lying dead in the same street.

"Such a thing as pity is insanity," declares a German officer, rebuking his men for giving food to a woman refugee with eight children. The next installment tells how the fugitives suffered as the German forces continued their sweep through Belgium into France.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ARTICHOKE IS EASY TO GROW

Favorite Vegetable, Declared to Be Valuable Article of Food for Both Man and Beast.

The Jerusalem artichoke deserves to be much better known in this country, which is its native land, for it is one of the favorite vegetables in all parts of Europe. It is easy to grow, and a most valuable article of food for man and beast. Prof. T. D. A. Cockerell of the University of Colorado extols its merits in the Scientific Monthly and tells some most interesting facts about it.

Its name is a curiosity to etymology. The word "artichoke" is derived from the Moorish "alkharshof," which was applied to the true, or globe artichoke, of which we eat the flower-head with its thickened bracts and the delicate "bottom." This plant, which is of the thistle family, is a native of the old world. The Jerusalem artichoke, *Helianthus tuberosus*, is a tuber which grows on the roots of a sunflower. It was well-known and much used by the natives of America before the coming of Columbus. It was introduced into France early in the seventeenth century and was grown in the Farnese gardens in Rome, whence it was distributed throughout Europe under the name of *Girasole Artichoke*, or sunflower artichoke. "The name artichoke," writes Professor Cockerell, "appears to have been given to the *Helianthus* solely on account of the more or less similar flavor, while 'Jerusalem' is an English corruption of the Italian 'Girasole,' or sunflower."

Greatest in the World.

The New York Connecting Railway bridge, which is better known as the Hell Gate bridge, with its three miles of elevated approaches, constitutes one of the greatest engineering projects of the world, overshadowed only by its importance as a trade route and public utility for passenger and freight traffic.

It is the world's heaviest bridge, of steel arch construction, accommodating four tracks. It is ready to bear the live load of 12 tons per linear foot while sustaining 26 tons of structure per linear foot. It is calculated that this live load may be likened to the weight of 45 of the biggest and heaviest of modern locomotives in motion.

Foiled Food Smugglers.

Smuggling of foodstuffs into Germany is being practiced in ingenious and unexpected ways. Three weeks ago a party of 50 persons crossed the frontier to take part in a masked ball in a little Swiss town. Toward midnight they returned in automobiles, which were warned to stop at the frontier. No notice being taken of the warning the Swiss sentinels fired and brought the cars to a standstill. The occupants, most of whom were discovered to be German soldiers, succeeded in making their escape, but the cars, in which were found to be hidden large quantities of soap, chocolate, butter, leather and fats, were seized by the authorities.

The German "Officers' Mess."

Hugh Gibson, who was secretary to the American legation in Belgium when the war broke out, can pack wit, humor and irony into a single paragraph and still keep it short. He visited a Belgian house that some German officers had occupied and later evacuated when their army retired. "Over the door," he writes, "was the inscription, 'Officers' Mess.' It was certainly the most complete mess that I ever saw. Until then I had regarded the expression, 'An officer and a gentleman,' as redundant. I no longer think so." Youth's Companion.

MOTHERS TO BE

Should Read Mrs. Monahan's Letter Published by Her Permission.

Mitchell, Ind.—"Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound helped me so much during the time I was looking forward to the coming of my little one that I am recommending it to other expectant mothers. Before taking it, sometimes I suffered with neuralgia so badly that I thought I could not live, but after taking three bottles of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I was entirely relieved of neuralgia, I had gained in strength and was able to go around and do all my housework. My baby when seven months old weighed 19 pounds and I feel better than I have for a long time. I never had any medicine do me so much good."—Mrs. PEARL MONAHAN, Mitchell, Ind.



Good health during maternity is a most important factor to both mother and child, and many letters have been received by the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., Lynn, Mass., telling of health restored during this trying period by the use of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Kill All Flies! THEY SPREAD DISEASE. Placed anywhere, Daisy Fly Killer attracts and kills all flies. Neat, clean, ornamental, convenient and cheap. Lasts all season. Made of metal, can't melt, tip over, will not soil or stain. Ask for Daisy Fly Killer. Sold by Druggists or by mail for 25c. Express, prepaid, \$1.00. H. H. SOHMER, 130 DE KALB AVE., BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Why Lose Your Hair The Cause is Dandruff and Itching; The Remedy Cuticura. All druggists; Soap 25c, Ointment 25c & 50c, Talcum 25c. Sample each free of "Cuticura," Dept. 2, Boston.

PARKER'S HAIR BALM A toilet preparation of merit. Helps to eradicate dandruff. For Restoring Color and Beauty to Gray or Faded Hair. 50c and \$1.00 at Druggists.

GUARDED—AS SACRED THING

Trust, Once Accepted, Must Be Held Inviolable in the Bottomless Depths of the Soul.

There is nothing adds so much to the strength and power of character as unflinching loyalty to a sacred trust. "Not to be trusted!" What a blow these words would be if they were true of many of those we treasure as jewels among our friends.

Unlike the secret—of which, when only a hint of it appears, it is quickly scattered abroad to tingle the ears of the curious—the sacred trust is silently and safely guarded in the security of the lips that are sealed, and the pen that would unfold is inkless! It is lodged where the eyes of the curious can never penetrate, nor the mischievous tongue reveal its mysteries.

Nor is it to be found on the honored parchment, and with those who are highly paid for trust's protection, but is written in invisible words, and the bottomless depths of the soul. Safe it is from the "spite thrower's dagger"—safe in thought, where no whisper or sound can steal its sacredness; ever conveying, ever adding strength and courage to the trusted. It is the only armor needed to find the worth of "friend."—W. Stewart Royston.

Grit!

They were motoring, and he bade defiance to all police traps. "We're going at fifty miles an hour," he said. "Are you brave?" She (swallowing another pint of dust)—Yes, dear, I'm full of grit.

It is said that the spare ribs are not popular with the Mormon people.

A Cool Breakfast for warm weather

No fussing round a hot stove if you eat

POST TOASTIES (MADE OF CORN) *Post Toasties*